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FM AMEMBASSY BOGOTA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1673
INFO RUEHSW/AMEMBASSY BERN PRIORITY 1419
RUEHBR/AMEMBASSY BRASILIA PRIORITY 8074
RUEHCV/AMEMBASSY CARACAS PRIORITY 0050
RUEHLP/AMEMBASSY LA PAZ MAR 9277
RUEHPE/AMEMBASSY LIMA PRIORITY 5975
RUEHMD/AMEMBASSY MADRID PRIORITY 0139
RUEHZP/AMEMBASSY PANAMA PRIORITY 1345
RUEHFR/AMEMBASSY PARIS PRIORITY 1229
RUEHQT/AMEMBASSY QUITO PRIORITY 6626
RUEHGL/AMCONSUL GUAYAQUIL PRIORITY 4319
RHMFISS/CDR USSOUTHCOM MIAMI FL PRIORITY
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY

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C O N F I D E N T I A L BOGOTA 000827

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 03/04/2018
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREF](#) [PREL](#) [PTER](#) [MOPS](#) [VZ](#) [SP](#) [FR](#) [SZ](#) [EC](#) [CO](#)
SUBJECT: COLOMBIA RESPONDS CALMLY TO VENEZUELA AND ECUADOR
DECISIONS TO BREAK DIPLOMATIC RELATIONS

REF: BOGOTA 800

Classified By: Political Counselor John S. Creamer.
Reasons: 1.4 (b) and (d).

SUMMARY

11. (C) After Venezuela's announcement on March 4 that it would close its border with Colombia, the GOC re-stated that it would not send troops to the Venezuelan or Ecuadorian

borders. Ecuadorian President Correa confirmed in a Colombian radio interview that he authorized GOE contacts with the FARC, claiming he was engaged in a secret "humanitarian exchange" negotiation with the group. The GOC plans to use international forums such as the OAS to make the GOC case for the raid against Raul Reyes' FARC camp in Ecuador (reftel). The local ICRC chief delegate predicted Reyes' death would lead to increased FARC desertions and accelerate the breakdown of communications between the FARC Secretariat and individual FARC fronts. END SUMMARY.

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VENEZUELA AND ECUADOR ESCALATE

12. (U) Venezuela's Minister of Agriculture Elias Jaua told the media on March 4 that due to the GOC's killing for FARC Secretariat member Raul Reyes in Ecuadorian territory, the

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GOV would "close its border" with Colombia. Jaua downplayed the possible impact of the border closing on Venezuela, saying, "at this moment we absolutely do not depend on Colombia." Commercial contacts along the Venezuela-Colombia border reported that the flow of some goods from Norte de Santander, Arauca, and Cesar departments were suspended on March 3-4, but they expected the flow to re-start soon due to dissatisfaction on both sides of the border. Contacts reported a normal flow of goods and people along the Colombia-Ecuador (Ipiales) border.

13. (U) Ecuadorian President Rafael Correa, speaking on "La FM" radio, said he had no quarrel with the Colombian people, but repeatedly accused President Uribe of being a liar. He said the GOC attack and accusations forced him to break relations. Correa claimed that he authorized Security Minister Gustavo Larrea to initiate contacts with the FARC to discuss a "humanitarian exchange." An angry Correa added that prior to the Colombian attack on Reyes camp, Ecuador's relations with Colombia were "the best ever." He also asserted that the GOE had been trying to capture Reyes. Still, Correa said he did not trust Uribe and so did not inform him of Larrea's contact with Reyes, calling it a "sovereign decision" to hold hostage talks with the FARC in Ecuadorian territory.

COLOMBIA RELEASES MORE EVIDENCE

14. (U) The GOC continued to release evidence from computers found at Reyes camp showing FARC ties to the GOV and GOE, including letters from FARC leader Manuel Marulanda to Chavez and photos of international visitors to the Reyes camp. Peace Commissioner Luis Carlos Restrepo publicly said Correa's claims that Larrea's contacts with Reyes were linked to humanitarian exchange discussions contradicted the facts. He repeated his claim that the GOE had tried to use the hostages to reach political deals with the FARC. Local media extensively covered President Bush's statements on the crisis following his phone conversation with Uribe.

COLOMBIA TAKES ITS CASE TO UN, OAS, ICC

15. (U) The GOC confirmed its decision not to react to GOV and GOE troop movements to the border, but pressed ahead with its

decision to exploit international forums to make the GOC case. President Uribe announced that the GOC would use evidence seized in Reyes' camp showing President Chavez promised \$300 million to the FARC to urge the International Criminal Court (ICC) to open a criminal investigation against Chavez for "sponsoring and financing genocide." In Geneva, Vice President Francisco Santos cited UNSCR 1373 during the

UN's 7th Human Rights Council meeting, adding, "in our continent there are those who intentionally do not comply with that mandate."

¶16. (C) Defense Minister Juan Manuel Santos told us the GOC would focus diplomacy on highlighting dangers of countries that support terrorists, using materials from the three computers found with Reyes. The GOC knew the strike on Reyes would not be a "free ride," but Santos said the benefits of killing Reyes exceed the costs. The seized computers and Chavez' reaction made it clear where Chavez stands. Correa, he added, was a "hypocrite." The GOC would use UN Article 51, UNSCRs 1368 and 1373, and the Reyes computer evidence showing GOV and GOE complicity with the FARC as the basis for its case in international forums.

¶17. (C) MOD Santos told us the GOC has heard that Chavez met with journalists claiming the GOV had located paramilitary camps along the border which were used to kidnap Venezuelans. Santos said the GOC was worried Chavez could use this as pretext to create an armed incident with Colombia. Santos said he requested that the OAS Peace Mission in Colombia (OAS/MAPP) identify and report on any new criminal group camps on the border so the GOC could dismantle or attack them.

REYES' DEATH LIKELY TO TRIGGER MORE FARC DESERTIONS

¶18. (C) Local ICRC chief delegate Barbara Hintermann told us Reyes' death would demoralize FARC members, prompting increased desertions by rank-and-file members as well as more important leaders. It would also accelerate the breakdown of communications between the Secretariat and individual FARC fronts, leading to a loss of command and control and giving Front commanders greater autonomy. She said that if asked by a FARC commander, the ICRC would consider playing a discreet role to facilitate his/her desertion or demobilization. Still, the ICRC would need to consider the security consequences for its delegates of acting without FARC Secretariat approval.

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¶19. (C) Hintermann said the impact of Reyes' death on a humanitarian exchange was unclear. Reyes did not exercise operational control over the hostages, but he was the ICRC's main contact on the issue with the Secretariat. She predicted there would be no more unilateral hostage releases by the FARC.

Brownfield

=====CABLE ENDS=====